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Importance: High



EPA Updates Superfund National Priorities List to Clean Up Pollution, Address Public Health Risks, and Build a Better America

EPA Proposes to Add Lower Hackensack River in Bergen and Hudson Counties, New Jersey to Superfund List

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NEW YORK (March 17, 2022) - Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it is adding 12 sites and proposing to add another five, including the Lower Hackensack River, to the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL). The federal NPL includes sites where releases of contamination pose significant human health and environmental risks.

"No community deserves to have contaminated sites near where they live, work, play, and go to school. Nearly 2 out of 3 of the sites being proposed or added to the priorities list are in overburdened or underserved communities," **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan**. "EPA is building a better America by taking action to clean up some of the nation's most contaminated sites, protect communities' health, and return contaminated land to safe and productive reuse for future generations."

"The industrial activities of New Jersey's past have helped build America, but it has also left behind a legacy of contamination that unfairly burdens communities of color," **said EPA Regional Administrator Lisa F. Garcia**. "By proposing to add the Lower Hackensack River to the National Priorities List, EPA is showing its commitment to overburdened and underserved communities - no project is too big, and America's natural resources are for everyone to enjoy."

"I am glad to see that the EPA is including additional sites on its Superfund National Priorities List and is proposing another New Jersey site as the agency puts funding from the bipartisan infrastructure bill to use and embarks on a massive cleanup of dozens of toxic sites across the country including several in New Jersey," **said Senator Bob**

Menendez. "New Jersey has more Superfund sites than any other state in the nation, which is why I fought hard to ensure that the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act included not only \$3.5 billion in additional appropriations for the program, but also reinstated the Superfund Tax on polluting industries to provide the program with a steady revenue stream. Adding these additional sites, including the proposed listing of the Lower Hackensack River in Hudson and Bergen Counties, is essential in transforming all communities impacted by toxic contamination."

"Today's announcement that the Lower Hackensack River will be added to the National Priorities List means that EPA will now have additional tools and resources at its disposal to clean and restore one of New Jersey's treasured waterways," **said Senator Cory Booker.** "I am grateful for the steadfast advocacy of local organizations, the State of New Jersey, and the EPA for their work to recognize the importance of remediating the Lower Hackensack through the Superfund program. As the state with the most Superfund sites in the nation, New Jersey has been especially harmed by legacy pollution. I am optimistic that with renewed funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, EPA is on the right track to remediating more toxic sites in America – particularly in Black, Brown, and low-income communities that disproportionately bear the brunt of toxic air, soil, and water."

"The EPA accepting our request and prioritizing the cleanup of our Lower Hackensack River here in North Jersey is terrific news. I have for years led federal efforts to restore the river from its current contaminated state because our communities, our children, and our environment deserve better," **said Congressman Bill Pascrell, Jr. (NJ-09).** "In July of last year, I wrote to my friends at the EPA requesting they include the Lower Hackensack on their National Priorities list so we could swiftly begin the Superfund cleanup process. I have also strongly supported the State of New Jersey's efforts to hold up their end of the bargain in this endeavor. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act passed by our Democratic Congress delivers once again. I commend EPA Administrator Regan, Regional Administrator Garcia, and the entire Biden Administration for their focus on environmental issues and their accessibility on local issues like this. Together we will restore the Lower Hackensack River to its former glory."

"The cleanup of the Lower Hackensack River is vital to the communities, stakeholders, and ecosystems within the watershed," **said Congressman Albio Sires (NJ-8).** "I urge swift consideration of the Lower Hackensack River, and advocate for its inclusion on the National Priorities List of Superfund sites, so that remediation can begin."

"We know that protecting our environment should be something that everyone, Democrats and Republicans, can come together around. That's why I'm working across North Jersey to protect and clean up our local water," **said Congressman Josh Gottheimer (NJ-5).** "By proposing the Lower Hackensack River be added to the Superfund National Priorities List, this means we'll be able to bring critical resources to boost this cleanup effort. The historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, which I helped shape and pass, includes critical investment in cleaning up Superfund sites and pollution. Now it's time to claw those resources back to help North Jersey. With this cooperation between the State of New Jersey and the federal government, we're working to stop further damage and contamination of North Jersey's waters and wildlife."

"Governor Murphy and I are thrilled that the EPA is taking this next important step toward adding the Lower Hackensack River to the National Priorities List," **said New Jersey Commissioner of Environmental Protection Shawn M. LaTourette.** "Designating the Lower Hackensack as a federal Superfund site will provide the tools we need to remove decades of contamination that have polluted river sediments and restore the natural resources that have been impaired for far too long. Cleanup of the river presents a remarkable opportunity to help the river reach its full potential as an ecological gem and economic asset in the heart of the state's most densely populated region."

The Lower Hackensack River site, identified as the 18.75-mile stretch of the river between the Oradell Dam and near the mouth of the river in Newark Bay, its associated wetlands, and the surrounding area, has been a center of industrial activities for more than 200 years. As a result, decades of sewage and industrial discharges into the river and its tributaries have contaminated river sediments. Prior studies and investigations show that the river contains sediments contaminated with arsenic, lead, chromium, mercury, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon compounds (PAHs), and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The Hackensack River is part of the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary and is a habitat to over 30 designated endangered or threatened species and home to over 8,400 acres of wetlands. The area of the river being proposed runs

through residential, commercial, industrial and public land. Due to the elevated contamination levels in fish throughout the Newark Bay Complex, including the tidal Hackensack River, NJDEP has placed multiple advisories on the river's recreational and fishing activities.

Thousands of contaminated sites, from landfills, processing plants, to manufacturing facilities exist nationally due to hazardous waste being dumped, left out in the open, or otherwise improperly managed. President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will accelerate EPA's work to help communities clean up these contaminated sites with a \$3.5 billion investment in the Superfund Remedial Program and reinstates the Superfund chemical excise taxes, making it one of the largest investments in American history to address legacy pollution. This historic investment strengthens EPA's ability to tackle threats to human health and the environment, and EPA has already set action in motion to clear the backlog of the 49 contaminated sites which had been awaiting funding to start remedial action.

Superfund cleanups provide health and economic benefits to communities. The program is credited for significant reductions in both birth defects and blood-lead levels among children living near sites, and research has shown residential property values increase up to 24 percent within three miles of sites after cleanup.

Further, thanks to Superfund cleanups, communities are now using previously blighted properties for a wide range of purposes, including retail businesses, office space, public parks, residences, warehouses, and solar power generation. As of 2021, EPA has collected economic data on 650 Superfund sites. At these sites, there are 10,230 businesses operating on these sites, 246,000 people employed, an estimated \$18.6 billion in income earned by employees, and \$65.8 billion in sales generated by businesses.

With this Superfund NPL update, the Biden-Harris Administration is following through on its commitment to update the NPL twice a year, as opposed to once per year. The Superfund Program is also part of President Biden's Justice40 initiative, which aims to ensure that federal agencies deliver at least 40 percent of benefits from certain investments to underserved communities.

Background

The NPL includes the nation's most serious uncontrolled or abandoned releases of contamination. The list serves as the basis for prioritizing EPA Superfund cleanup funding and enforcement actions. Only releases at sites included on the NPL are eligible to receive federal funding for long-term, permanent cleanup.

EPA proposes sites to the NPL based on a scientific determination of risks to people and the environment, consistent with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act and the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan. Before EPA adds a site to the NPL, a site must meet EPA's requirements and be proposed for addition to the list in the Federal Register, subject to a 60-day public comment period. EPA will add the site to the NPL if it continues to meet the listing requirements after the public comment period closes and the agency has responded to any comments.

For information about Superfund and the NPL, please visit <https://www.epa.gov/superfund>.

For Federal Register notices and supporting documents for NPL and proposed sites, please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/superfund/current-npl-updates-new-proposed-npl-sites-and-new-npl-sites>.

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